WORKS IN PROGRESS

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Cuba: A Revolution Worth Defending

by Peter Bohmer

Understanding Cuban society objectively is incredibly difficult, given 45 years of unremitting US propaganda against Fidel Castro, the Cuban government and Cuban society. Even for those individuals critical of the U.S. mainstream media, constantly hearing the Cuban government called a dictatorship that has failed its people, influences our perceptions. So do interviews or discussions with Cubans who have immigrated to the United States, most of whom are very critical of the Cuban system. I urge the reader to be open to the following article which presents a viewpoint at variance with the mainstream one of Cuba. This positive, but not uncritical analysis of Cuba, is based on in-depth study of Cuba for more than 35 years, two visits to Cuba in the early 1990's, living there for four months in 2001, and the recent trip I made with 23 students in April and May, 2004.

To understand Cuban society, we have to place the political economy of Cuba today, its successes and real problems, in the context of the following:

1. *400 years of Spanish colonialism.* This began with genocidal attacks against the indigenous people of Cuba, followed by an economy organized around sugar plantations, where most of the labor force were enslaved and super-exploited Africans. Slavery ended in 1886, but extreme racism and economic segregation of blacks continued until 1959.

2. *U.S. domination and aggression.* During the 1895-1898 Cuban war for independence, the U.S. intervened militarily, claiming to support independence for Cuba, but then dominated Cuba economically and politically until 1959. As a condition for the U.S. ending its military occupation of Cuba, Cuba had to sign the Platt Amendment, which was the basis for establishing the U.S. base in Guantanamo, Cuba. Today in Guantanamo, prisoners from around the world are being held indefinitely with no rights and subject to brutal treatment by the U.S. military. In addition, the U.S. and Cuban elites dominated Cuba from 1902 to 1959, with the U.S. sending troops and supporting Cuban governments who were favorable to U.S. investors and undermining those who weren't.

photo: Melody Livingston

Party with the Holgun Committee for the Defense of the Revolution.

3. *Cuba's alliances with the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc.* In 1961, two years after the victory of the Cuban revolution, Cuban President Fidel Castro declared the country socialist and increasingly oriented its politics and economy towards the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union and its allies paid a goodprice for sugar and sold Cuba oil at reduced prices. They also extended many loans to Cuba. Cuba's economy, including its technology and machinery, consumption goods, imports and exports and methods of economic planning became increasingly integrated with those of the Soviet Union and its allies. This often meant utilizing technology and using products that were below the quality available in the West. Cuba diversified its economy slowly, continuing to rely on sugar exports as its main source of foreign exchange.

The Soviet system collapsed in 1989 and ever since, Cuba has had a very difficult time maintaining socialist principles while developing a different economic model from the Soviet-inspired one. The transition to different technologies has been difficult and costly. Cuba has attempted to but has not been successful in developing an economy that is both equal and also provides an increasing standard of living for its people. The Cuban government has called the period since 1989, the Special Period.

4. *Global Capitalism.* Cuba is part of a global economic system that is increasingly unequal within and between countries. For example, the price of Cuba's main export good, sugar, sells for lower and lower prices relative to the prices of Cuba imports, e.g., machines, and consumer durables like refrigerators, on the world market.

5. *The United States Blockade.* During the period of Cuba's alliance with the U.S.S.R., the U.S. claimed that hostility towards Cuba was because Cuba was an extension of the U.S.S.R in the Americas. However, notice that the U.S. intervention has become even more aggressive since the collapse of the U.S.S.R. which should lead us to question the U.S. rationale in the past as well as the present. The U.S. embargo, which the Cubans call a blockade, because it limits Cuban trade with other countries besides the U.S., means that Cuba has had to pay a higher price for goods on the world market that it imports such as medicines and food, and has had to maintain a larger military budget than it would otherwise. The blockade has also significantly reduced Cuba's ability to export, which in turns means its ability to import has also been reduced.

This is the context for understanding Cuba today. So when U.S. leaders and academics say Cuba is a failed experiment, economically and politically, they ignore this context. To me, the five points I have outlined are the starting points for understanding Cuba but not the end points. My position is a critically supportive one that examines the Cuban model and its decisions and policy. There are a few aspects that I disagree with.

The Golden Period of the Cuban Revolution

From the 1960's to the late 1980's, Cuba was one of the most economically equal countries in the world. Almost all production was owned and organized by the state. There was free health care, equal access to free education, and full employment. Hundreds of thousands of apartments were built in Cuban cities—often in the form of huge apartment complexes such as Alamar in Havana. In the countryside, electrification, indoor plumbing, drinkable water and basic housing was provided for almost all Cubans. Hunger and absolute poverty were overcome.

Cuba was not a utopia during this period. There were limited and insufficient consumer goods, slow economic growth with a very slow rising of the standard of living; and a paternalistic system where the government listened to the people and management listened to worker complaints but the decisions were made at the top. There were important and major gains for women in accessing higher education and entering and advancing in significant numbers in many professions but little change in the sexual division of labor at home, as women still did most of the housework.

There were striking changes towards achieving racial equality as discrimination was outlawed, and the proportion of black Cubans in secondary and higher education and in higher status jobs began to approach their numbers in the population although the top leadership in Cuban society was still disproportionately white and male. The gains for families who were poor before the 1959 Cuban revolution, particularly in rural areas, was truly impressive—in education, income, health, housing, and in being treated with respect and dignity. Cuba had truly become a society that was successful in changing for the better the lives of those who had been historically at the bottom. This is an accomplishment whose significance cannot be overstated. In the early 1980's, in an article in the Wall Street Journal, the author grudgingly admitted that the standard of living for working people in Cuba was the highest in Latin America, with the possible exception of Puerto Rico.

Cuba called itself socialist, meaning most production was nationalized and state-owned, and production was not organized for profit but rather was cen-

(Continued on page 6.)

Still on the Prowl for Cash

Howdy once again WIP readers. We're taking up some space on the front page again in order to remind you that it is time to help us pad our money bags.

Here's the financial scoop: The WIP collective is entirely volunteer. That means every single job done by our 13-person collective is done without compensation (unless you count the glory of having our names printed on page 2). However, the printers apparently prefer riches to glory and therefore charge us $350-450 every month for their services.

WIP has experienced a bit of a boom this past year, and one aspect of that has been an increase in article submissions. This is wonderful for the community-more timely alternative information on local issues. But it's hard on WIP financially, because our ads and submissions haven't covered the larger print runs.

So here we are, calling to those of you who value WIP and want to keep reading lots of it. We are inviting you to buy a SUBSCRIPTION right away. If you own or work for a local business, we encourage you to place an ADVERTISEMENT. (There's information on how to subscribe or advertise on page 2.) Or you can send a donation to Works In Progress at P.O. box 295, Olympia, WA 98507-0295.

And we hope to feed you at our upcoming Open Secret Pizzeria Café on September 18. This is a one-night-only fundraising event featuring pizza, local brew, music, soup, salad, fresh pressed apple cider, and desserts. Oh, yeah, and pickles! For details and directions see the ad on page 7.

No matter how you do it, if you love what WIP gives to the community, now's the time to give to WIP.

WORKS IN PROGRESS

Works In Progress is a community newspaper sponsored by the Thurston County Rainbow Coalition. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Rainbow Coalition or the Workers In Progress and are solely those of the authors.

Submissions:

Correspondence, articles, art, and photographs are always welcome. Please, when possible, put articles on a 3.5" IBM-compatible disk (text preferred) or via e-mail. Artwork and photos should be camera-ready/black & white.

WIP reserves the right to publish in whole or part all submissions. For editing purposes, please enclose your phone number.

Articles may be reprinted. Please cite source.

If you don't see your issue being covered in Works In Progress, it's because you aren't writing about it! (Or aren't finding someone else to cover it!)

Send submissions to *Works In Progress*, PO Box 295, Olympia, WA 98507-0295, <wip@olywa.net>

Governing Tool:

The following statement is part of the Editorial Policy and is the governing tool for the Anti-Discrimination Clause: *WIP will make every effort to work with the contributor of material considered by WIP to be offensive in order to reach a mutually agreed upon resolution, but WIP reserves the right as a last resort to edit or not print submitted material.*

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Mission Statement:

"Our aim is to confront injustice and encourage a participatory democracy based on economic, social, and environmental justice. Works In Progress is dedicated to providing a voice for those most affected by the exclusionary and unfair practices that seek to silence the oppressed."

Anti-Discrimination Clause:

We will collectively endeavor to be sensitive and respectful to all those oppressed in this society, and their issues. However, if and when we should make a mistake in this regard, we expect to acknowledge it and to express regret for injury or insult given.

Back Issues:

Get your catalog of indexed WIPs below. Some back issues are available in the Timberland Library system. WIP is being archived on microfilm by the UW Library.

On the Cover: Cuban Farmer by Melody Livingston

2004 Evergreen graduate and freelance photographer who traveled with Peter Bohmer's class to Cuba.

WIP Schedule

Submission Deadline:

September 24th

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EGYHOP Fall/Winter Homeless Outreach

Although we are still having long summery days, the cold wet months of fall/winter are just around the corner. Emma Goldman Young and Homeless Outreach Project volunteers will be on the streets again this winter bringing comfort and aid to the street population.

This year there have been cutbacks in all sorts of homeless services. South Sound Mental Health has lost their outreach homeless worker; and shelter bed availability is down. Many other services have not received the funding they need to provide for the increasing homeless population.

So EGYHOP's job is going to be more important then ever. EGYHOP brings to the streets those little survival items like sleeping bags/blankets, socks, gloves, coats/hats and hygiene care items that can make a person's life just a little more bearable. A dry pair of socks and a coat, maybe a sleeping bag or a tarp to keep the cold out and rain off can be the difference between misery and comfort. Sometimes it's just a friendly face and a referral to other services which provides homeless people a social connection to out larger community. EGYHOP will be on the streets doing outreach again this winter and we ***need your help***!

It is now that we start collecting cold weather items to stock up for the foul weather this fall/winter. Last year our teams put a dump truck load of blankets/sleeping bags/coats and other basic survival care items on the street to aid in people's survival. It is because of the donations that people like you make, that we can provide these basic care items to the marginalized members of our community. EGYHOP is only an extension of our community's supporters; we spread the love that people of this area donate through us.

We are now collecting supplies for fall/winter; your donations of the following items will make a difference in people's lives:

- **Tents/tarps**
- **Sleeping bags**
- **Blankets**
- **Large and extra large winter coats**, fleece sweaters and hooded sweatshirts, (Remember in the winter even medium build people start layering up, so large and extra large items are in the greatest demand).
- **Socks!** One of the most humane items that EGYHOP provides is clean dry socks. A donation of tube socks really is a great way to help support this project and the people we serve. Last year it was one of our greatest expenditures.
- **Hygiene items such as:** Tampons, razors, small tubes of toothpaste/tooth brushes, and deodorant are most often the hardest items to keep on hand.
- **Donation of cash/checks is needed;** 80 percent of all cash donation are spent on sleeping bags/blankets and socks. We purchase sleeping bags and blankets from the Goodwill and always shop the sales in order to make our funds go as far as we can.

Our thanks and best wishes go out to all from the EGYHOP team!

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September 2004

America's continuing 9/11
— The Uninsured —

- The uninsured are less likely to receive recommended preventive/screening services, or medicines and treatments that meet professional standard.
- Uninsured car crash victims were found to receive less care in the hospital and had a 37% higher mortality rate than privately insured patients.
- Uninsured women with breast cancer have a risk of dying that is between 30% and 50% higher than for insured women.
- If childhood conditions such as asthma, and middle-ear infections are left untreated or improperly controlled...they can affect mental and language development, school performance, and hearing.

There are 18,000 preventable deaths in the US each year from the lack of health insurance. That's the equivalent of six 9/11s every year. Another facet of real homeland security. Cynthia Collingwood

Sources: The Institute of Medicine of the National Academies

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 2000: Clinton decides to leave it up to the next administration whether to authorize the building of the missile defense system	**2** 2003: 9th Circuit Fed Appeals Court rejects 100 death sentences because they were decided by judges rather than juries	**3** 2002: Israeli's Supreme Court rules the military may exile relatives of terrorist suspects from the West Bank to Gaza	**4** 1940- Hitler promises German people he will invade Great Britain 2001: WA state orders insurers to cover contraceptives	**5** 2002: Survey shows health insurance costs rose 27% for individuals and 16% for families while benefits were reduced	**6** 2003: Pew poll: 70% believe Saddam had a role in 9-11 2003: Number of US troops wounded in Iraq reaches 1,120	**7** 1963: US backed South Vietnam President Diem arrests 800 high school students for demonstrating against his rule
8 1974: Nixon pardoned by Ford 2003: Oxford Research Group report says al-Qaida stronger than before 9-11	**9** 2003: House votes 227-188 to lift Cuba travel ban 2003: Study reports health care premiums rose 13.9 this year	**10** 2003: Defense Secretary Rumsfeld says most the prisoners at Guan-tanamo will be there for the duration of global war on terrorism	**11** 2003: Conservation International reports 100s of species face exinction in next 2 decades 2003: 11 Iraqi police are killed by US troops	**12** 1932: Jobless seize food in Toledo, OH 2003: Wolfwitz retracts claim Saddam loyalists plotting w/ al-Qaida to kill Americans in Iraq	**13** 2000: Held for 9 months in solitary for claim he a threat to national security, Wen Ho Lee is released w/ apology from judge	**14** 2003: Israel: killing Arafat an option 2003: EPA: allowed levels of soot harm elderly and those w/ respiratory problems
15 1845: Women cotton workers strike for 10-hour day in PA 2003: Fed court rules WA states blanket primary unconstitutional	**16** 2003: Rumsfeld says Saddam had nothing to do w/ 9-11 2003: BC court decriminalizes pot possession	**17** 2003: Bush: Saddam had no part of 9/11 2003: UN reports Antarctic ozone hole reaches record 10.8 million square miles	**18** 2003: Superior court judge refuses to review second round of criminal charges against Forest Glen owner Eli Moreno	**19** 1981: 300,000 demonstrators protest social policies of the Reagan administration in Solidarity Day march on Washington, DC	**20** 2001: Bush: "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists." 2003: Captain James Yee is detained by the military	**21** 2002: GAO reports contractors cleaning up Hanford nuclear waste receive large bonuses in spite of delays/cost overruns
22 2003: 4 directors of Zimbabwe's only independent daily newspaper are charged of dissent and violating severe media laws	**23** 2003: Olympia City Council suspends Matthew Green 2003: Eli Moreno to pay City of Olympia $163,000 settlement	**24** 2003: Schwarzenegger tells Arianna Huffington "I just realized that I have a perfect part for you in Terminator 4"	**25** 2003: UN pulls most of its staff out of Iraq 2003: Nigerian Islamic appeals court throws out the case of women who was to be stoned	**26** 2000: 5,000 protest IMF summit 2002: US agribusiness exhibition opens in Havana; Castro buys $18.5 million in 2 days	**27** 2002: Bush/Blair ask UN to give Iraq 7 days to agree to disarm/open palaces for inspection 2003: Nigeria sends its 1st satellite into space	**28** 2000: World Conservation Union: 11,046 plants/animals species at risk of extinction 2002: 150,000+ march in London against war
29 2003: # of people w/o health insurance last year increased 6% to 43.6 million 2000: DoE: some Hanford barrels bottomless	**30** 1999: B & R closes family drop-in center 30, 2003: Huffington leaves CA governor race to help stop Schwarzenegger					

...the next great advance in the evolution of civilization cannot take place until war is abolished.

Gen Douglas MacArthur

$34 billion to $69 billion — estimated cost to insure the uninsured — 3 to 5.6 % of the annual spending for personal health care services in 2001.

$128 Billion — amount the US has spent on the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Marriage Equality

Public Enemy Number One of the Religious Right

by Anna Schlecht

This article is the third in a series on the issues surrounding same-gender marriage

In less than a year, conservative religious activists have re-tooled their weapons for their ground war against marriage equality. The result is a kinder, gentler homophobia still bent on reversing every gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered civil rights gain of the past 20 years. High on their list is amending first our State Constitution and then the Federal Constitution to ban same gender marriage.

This shift represents a significant sea change in their rhetoric. In earlier, unkinder times, anti-gay activists looked no further than their Bibles, ignoring the thousands of references to love and acceptance and zeroing in on the few sections that address same-gender relations. In public hearings on local gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered, or glbt civil rights measures, these activists would invoke Sodom and Gomorrah, hellfire and brimstone and generally present themselves as intolerant zealots.

After a solid decade of losing every anti-gay initiative campaign and failing to defeat even a single local ordinance to protect gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered civil rights, they realized that the public would not accept hate as a family value. So they went back to the drawing board. The result has been a new wave of smooth, benign-sounding propaganda that avoids extremist religious references and replaces that with a compassionate understanding of the "homosexual problem" and a calmly stated defense of what they term traditional marriage. As with all professionally managed message campaigns, their new slogans sound reasonable to the general public. In spite of the new approach, they have the same goals to eradicate glbt civil rights.

The conservative organization leading the charge against marriage equality in Washington State is "Families NW," is the current incarnation of "Focus on the Family," which was instrumental in the anti-glbt initiative campaigns throughout the 1990's in Washington. Headed up by Jeff Kemp, the former executive director of Focus on the Family in Washington, Families NW serves as the incubator for "Traditional Marriage" activists.

Families NW kicked off a statewide speakers training in Olympia this past July. Clearly responding to polling data, this organization reflects the new thinking in its name, its approach and it's propaganda in trying to reach Middle America to build their opposition to same gender marriage. Their website offers a comprehensive array of tactics for opposing marriage equality, including local church-based activities for new recruits and media strategies for the more experienced activists. Following is an example of a talking point for opponents of marriage equality, stressing a warmer and friendlier homophobia:

"Most of us instinctively know that marriage is critical to the health of our society, but we may struggle to articulate why, especially in light of the recent national debate to permanently alter marriage. Why is it so important that marriage be defined as one man and one woman? Why does a child need both a mom and a dad? How would giving marital status to homosexual couples negatively affect our society?"

At the national level, Families.org serves as command center for traditional marriage activists. Formerly known as Focus on the Family, this organization is still headed up by Dr. James Dobson, author of a staggering number of religious right books. Their web site offers a broad array of articles and activities, including one of Dobson's latest books referenced as follows:

"Why not gay 'marriage'? Why shouldn't the definition of family be broadened and modernized? What harm could be done by two consenting adults who love one another coming together to create a binding union? In *Marriage Under Fire,* Dr. James Dobson presents a compelling case against the legalization of 'marriage' between homosexuals and the dire ramifications our nation could face. Traditional values in our nation are in severe jeopardy. Will you rise to defend them?"

In a related piece, Dobson lays out his "battle plan" to oppose same gender marriage, stating with that it will destroy traditional marriage, harm children, jeopardize religious freedom, undermine the gospel of Jesus Christ, exhaust the Social Security System, inundate the health care system, and open the door to bizarre forms of marriage involving animals. Much of the initial emphasis is upon the alleged threat to children, utilizing well-crafted messages that fit seamlessly next to media sensationalized cases of child abuse and abduction.

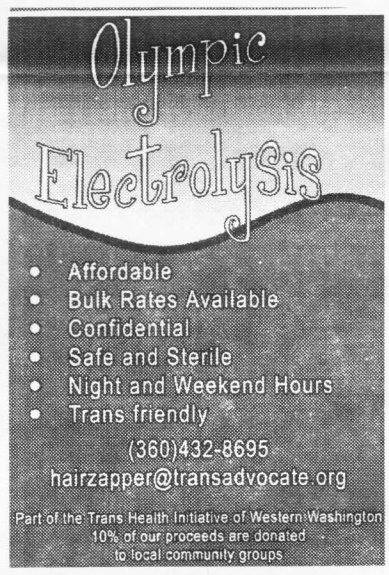
This past July, the local Families NW sponsored a full page ad in the Seattle Times that featured a large photo of an alarmed looking infant, with the headline, "How will Redefining Marriage Affect Children?" As a compelling image, their ad sought to equate the current lawsuits in Washington State suing for equality with a threat to vulnerable children. This allows them to side step the issue of civil rights entirely.

Sound bites are dangerously appealing to an electorate under a constant barrage of messages. In truth, most polls show that the majority of respondents don't care strongly about the issue of marriage equality. But they do care about the safety of children, and if Social Security might dry up before they need it. Ironically, they also care about fairness and consistently oppose discrimination of any sort. Clearly, the framing of their homophobic agenda is calculated for the maximum impact, while glossing over the religious underpinnings of their goal to roll back the clock on civil rights.

It will be incumbent upon supporters of same-gender marriage to counter this new war of words with a powerful explanation of why they support equality versus codifying discrimination into both the State and Federal Constitutions. We must offer our own personal stories of the discrimination we face because we cannot protect our families and partners. We can make simple statements as to why all citizens should be afforded the same access to the 300 plus state level and 1,000 plus federal level rights and responsibilities of legal marriage. The truth is always the best antidote for homophobia.

Next Month: Status of the two lawsuits pending in Washington State

The framing of their homophobic agenda is calculated for the maximum impact while glossing over the religious underpinnings of their goal to roll back the clock on civil rights.



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Why I Am Voting for Ralph Nader This Year

by Dave Jette

This article is in response to Wayne Roberts's article, "Defeating Bush", published in the Summer 2004 issue of *Independent Politics News*. Roberts well describes how terrible are the Bush administration's policies – both domestic and foreign. In fact, I might be even more blunt: Bush and his coterie are pushing Christian Fascism on our country, and the Bush administration represents – indeed, feeds upon – much of what is most evil in our society. Unlike Roberts, however, I do not conclude that progressives should be supporting Kerry in order to defeat Bush in this year's Presidential election, and instead I shall be voting for Ralph Nader.

I have two basic disagreements with Roberts's analysis. First he writes (accurately) that Bush and his advisors represent the most extreme and reactionary wing of U.S. capitalism, ruthlessly pursuing the expansion of the U.S. Empire. What he doesn't say is that Kerry and the mainstream Democrats have exactly the same goal of worldwide domination, and moreover that they are able to promote American imperialism far more effectively. As seen with his Iraq War, Bush is like a bull in a china shop, alienating major allies by dismissing their strategic concerns and not allowing them their fair share of the fruits of five centuries of Western imperialism. The Clinton/Gore administration was able to maintain United Nations-approved economic sanctions which killed over one million young Iraqi children with far less outcry from the American people than that resulting from G.W. Bush's outright invasion of that country. Is it such a bad thing that France, Germany, and Russia have been driven to start building an alliance to oppose the unrestrained actions of American imperialism? Or that, as Roberts mentions, Bush's military and economic policies "will inevitably lead to catastrophic financial disaster" for the world's foremost terrorist country?

Second, Roberts writes that "we will have to light a fire under a Kerry administration to deal in a positive way" with various crucial issues, but how are we going to do that when we support the mainstream Democrats at the ballot box regardless of what they do? Kerry and the Democrats overwhelmingly supported the Patriot Act and the Iraq War (including our continued occupation of that country); they strongly support the obscene military budget, NAFTA, the WTO, Israel's occupation of Palestine, "defense of marriage", etc. As Roberts writes, Kerry and the Democrats "will not really work for jobs for all at living wages, universal health care, affordable housing, basic reform of a racist criminal justice system, or a fair and progressive tax system". This is because, as Roberts points out, the Democrats like the Republicans are controlled by big business. By continually voting for the "lesser of two evils", we are hardly going to light any fire under these corporate-controlled politicians. And are we to believe that the 2008 Presidential election will present us with a qualitatively different choice, whether or not Kerry wins this time?

Voting for Kerry and the Democrats means voting for the most effective pursuance of American imperialism, to the great detriment of peoples throughout the world.

The Green Party, with its excellent politics, has chosen to run a Presidential campaign specifically designed not to influence the outcome of the election, although this campaign will be promoting progressive stands in strong contrast to those of the two major-party candidates. Its candidate will be urging people to vote for himself (in order to build the Green Party) in "safe states" which are solidly Democratic or solidly Republican, while in "battleground states" he will be running more of an informational campaign (pointing out that Kerry is a corporate militarist, etc.) while saying that people should vote their consciences. Such a campaign may be of interest to Green Party activists, but why would others have any respect for a political party which runs a purposely irrelevant candidate? Far better for the Greens to be running or endorsing no Presidential candidate, and instead to expend their limited energy and resources on meaningful local and statewide campaigns to build the Green Party and the progressive movement in general.

And then we have prominent liberals and (some) progressives decrying Ralph Nader's Presidential candidacy. Not only would they effectively deny Nader's right to run, but, far more importantly, they would deny the right of millions of people to vote for someone whom they consider to represent their interests rather than having to choose between two unacceptable candidates. I for one would not vote for Kerry even if Nader were not running, but instead would vote for a Libertarian who at least opposes the Iraq War and the Patriot Act. But perhaps the arrogance of these Nader castigators is meant not for me but rather for the unthinking masses.

It is not the purpose of this article to convince people to join me in voting for Ralph Nader. I realize that there are strong, coherent arguments to be made by all sides in this debate, that the Bush administration's push toward Christian Fascism must be taken very seriously. People will have to vote their consciences, weighing all the ramifications of their choice. But I do want to make clear that voting for Kerry and the Democrats, however necessary doing so may be judged to be, does nevertheless mean voting for the most effective pursuance of American imperialism, to the great detriment of peoples throughout the world.

I should also point out that the decision of so many progressives to support a person like Kerry as the "lesser of two evils" demonstrates the failure of the progressive electoral movement to build any sort of viable alternative to the corporate-controlled two-party system during the past two decades (starting with Jesse Jackson Sr.'s Rainbow Coalition). We must realize that the creation of such an alternative is not going to happen unless and until nationally prominent, truly progressive Democrats – such as Dennis Kucinich, Jesse Jackson Sr., and Jesse Jackson Jr. – decide to give leadership in creating an independent national progressive electoral organization which can draw together progressive Democrats (and Republicans!), Greens, and other progressive activists in effective cooperative electoral activity. Hopefully this will happen soon after the dust has settled from this year's difficult Presidential election.

The author served as Corresponding Secretary of the Washington State Rainbow Coalition in 1989-1990, as Secretary of Ralph Nader's Presidential Campaign in Washington State in 1996, as Secretary of the Green Party of Seattle in 2001, and as Treasurer of five local electoral campaigns in 1999-2003.

Freedom Vote

2004 Primary Election Endorsements

Candidates Seeking Local Elected Offices

Freedom vote evaluates candidates solely upon their positions and public records regarding gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, or glbt civil rights. Freedom Vote encourages voters to become informed on candidate positions on the full range of public policy issues.

CANDIDATE	POSITION SOUGHT	RATING
Cathy Wolfe	County Commissioner, Dist 1	Strongly Endorse
Scott Barricklow	County Commissioner, Dist 1	Shows Potential
Diane Oberquell	County Commissioner, Dist 2	Strongly Endorse
Lee Leighton	County Commissioner, Dist 2	No Endorsement
Bill Pilkey	County Commissioner, Dist 2	Oppose
Frank Leuck	County Commissioner, Dist 2	Oppose
Brendan Williams	State Rep, Dist 22, Pos. 1	Strongly Endorse
Laura Ware	State Rep, Dist 22, Pos. 1	Strongly Endorse
Randy Scott	State Rep, Dist 22, Pos. 1	Strongly Endorse
Nadine Romero	State Rep, Dist 22, Pos. 1	Endorse
Margaret Holm	State Rep, Dist 22, Pos. 1	Strongly Endorse
Rhonda Larson	State Rep, Dist 22, Pos. 1	No Endorsement
Dave Gordon	State Rep, Dist 22, Pos. 1	No Endorsement
Ann Burgman	State Rep, Dist 22, Pos. 1	Oppose
Sam Hunt	State Rep, Dist 22, Pos. 2	Strongly Endorse
Karen Fraser	State Senator, District 22	Strongly Endorse

Candidate Rating Guide

Strongly Endorse - Candidate has a proven public track record in supporting glbt civil rights.
Endorse - Candidate expresses support for glbt civil rights but has no demonstrable public record.
Shows Potential - Candidate expresses limited support for glbt issues, needs more information.
No Endorsement - Candidate has not given a clear position on the issues to warrant any rating.
Oppose - Candidate opposes and/or has a demonstrable record against glbt civil rights.

Freedom Vote: PO Box 7221, Olympia, WA 98507

(Cuba, cont. from page one.)
trally planned to meet the economic needs of the population. However, the population had limited power in making major economic and political decisions, e.g., on whether to develop nuclear power.

The input of the population then and now comes mainly through the mass organizations, such as the community-based Committees to Defend the Revolution (CDR), the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), and the Cuban Federation of Workers (CTC). It is through these mass organizations as well as through the Communist Party, whose current membership numbers over a million, and whose members are for the most part respected by the Cuban people and closely linked to the grass roots, that people can express their needs. In other words, to look at this system as totally top down where Fidel orders and the people follow misrepresents the reality of a government quite connected to popular sentiments. On the other hand, a viewpoint that claims that the Cuban people and their elected representatives have the power is also inaccurate.

The Special Period

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and various economic and trade arrangements that Cuba had with the Soviet bloc, Cuban production fell by more than one third from 1989 to 1993 and Cuban imports and exports were reduced by more than two thirds. In the early 1990's, there was widespread eye blindness and other health problems from an insufficient diet and lack of vitamins. The survival of the Cuba revolution was at stake. Cuba has survived with slow but significant economic growth and a growing consumption of necessities over the last 10 years. Nonetheless, most of the population has a lower standard of living—around 25% lower than they had in the mid 1980's. Most Cubans, unless they have some way of earning or receiving dollars, live in poverty although they are not hungry or homeless.

Most countries in the third world or global South have had to structurally adjust their economies since the early 1980's because of balance of payments problems, meaning they imported more than they exported, and thus, had to make deals with foreign lenders such as the International Monetary Fund in order to get loans to pay off the foreign debt they were accumulating. The resulting structural adjustment plans have increased economic inequality and reduced social spending as countries have been forced to reduce government spending and public employment and to open their country up to foreign investors.

Cuba's structural adjustment since 1989 has been different, although they too have a major foreign debt and have struggled to reduce the imbalance between high imports and low exports. To its credit, the Cuban state, has maintained basic social services—free and available medical and dental care, free education up to and including university level, and food rations for the population at low and affordable prices, although not the quantity or variety that Cubans need and desire. Housing and utility bills are affordable; although housing is often very crowded and most people do not have phones. Infant mortality has continued to fall and life expectancy has continued to lengthen. Infant mortality, life expectancy and the health of the population is the best in Latin America and is close to that of the United States.

Peter Bohmer's class in front of one of the many anti-Bush billboards that dot the Cuban landscape. *Photo by Melody Livingston*

With the exception of agriculture, most production is still organized by the Cuban state. Although there no longer is full employment, jobs are easier to obtain and keep compared to other countries in the Americas. Most young people can find jobs although wages for most jobs are very low. The unemployed as well as parents of children under a year old receive 60 to 70% of the earnings of their last employment, and parents are guaranteed their job back when they return to work. Child care is available and affordable.

Changes in the Cuban Economy

The major changes Cuba has made since 1989 have led to some improvement in the standard of living but has created a new set of social problems. The main changes are the following:

1. *Legalization and widespread use of the dollar inside Cuba.* Since 1993, both the dollar and the Cuban peso are used as money. Many goods in Cuba, mainly luxuries and imports are priced in dollars or if in pesos, their prices are very high for Cubans because they are converted from dollars to pesos at the rate of 25 pesos to the dollar. For example, chicken sells at about $1 U.S. or 25 pesos per pound. Because of the high prices of these goods and services in relation to salaries, this makes these goods inaccessible to Cubans who don't receive dollars. The average salary in Cuba is 250 pesos a month. This is worth far more than ten dollars in terms of purchasing power which is what 250 pesos can be converted into at the exchange rate of about 25 pesos to the dollar. In calculating the purchasing power of Cuban salaries, one must consider that health and education are free; and that prices are low, even in pesos, for food purchased on one's ration card. For other goods and services, a peso is roughly equal in value to a dollar, e.g., movies or bus transportation. On the other hand, for many imports, e.g., a pair of jeans the price is $20 or 500 pesos, twice the average monthly salary; and the price of cooking oil is $2 or 50 pesos for one liter (quart). Given the lack of goods available at affordable prices, life is very difficult on a peso salary.

Both the Cuban economy and Cuban families are dependent on remittances, which is money sent by relatives to their families in Cuba. This provides foreign exchange to the Cuban government, as much of this money is spent on Cuban goods and services, and the Cuban state and Cuban enterprises then use these dollars they receive to buy needed imports. It also provides purchasing power for the 40 to 50% of Cuban families who directly or indirectly receive remittances. George W. Bush in an increased effort to destroy the Cuban economy in order to cause an uprising, announced on May 6, 2004, further restrictions on sending remittances and gifts to Cuban relatives.

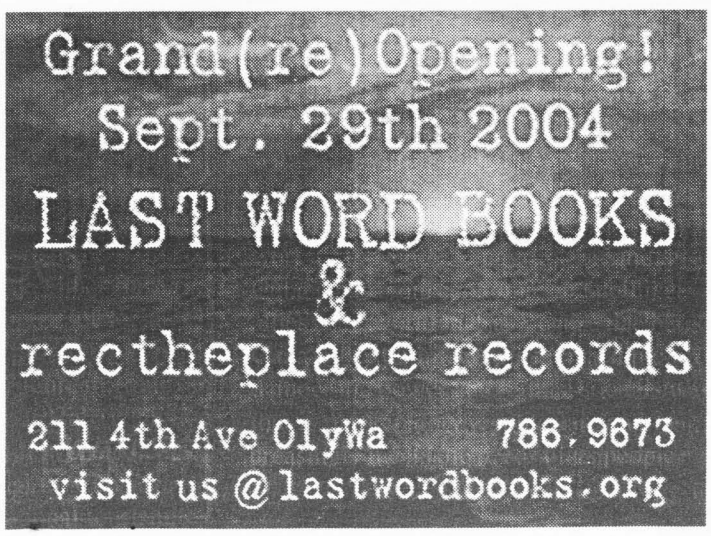
In addition, some Cubans in government enterprises earn dollars. Since 1993, some highly skilled jobs considered essential pay an incentive in dollars in addition to the salary in pesos. A friend of ours who is an engineer gets $11 a month in addition to his monthly salary of 350 pesos.

2. *Tourism.* About two million tourists now visit Cuba annually, mainly from Western Europe, Canada, and Mexico. The U.S. government not only is putting further restrictions on U.S. tourism but is trying to limit tourism to Cuba from other countries. Tourism is the main earner of foreign exchange and Cuba is increasingly producing more of what tourists consume. Two third of each tourist dollar is now spent on Cuban-produced goods and services and thus creates foreign exchange that can be used for imports for the Cuban people.

Tourism is a mixed blessing. It creates foreign exchange but it also increases desire by the Cuban population for a first world standard of living. It reinforces sexism as young Cuban women often sell themselves to foreigners. Tourism also furthers racial inequality as black Cubans are underrepresented in the tourist sector, both in Cuban-owned enterprises and in mixed enterprises, meaning joint Cuban and foreign ownership. The government and unions have acknowledged this problem but it continues.

Much of the income generated from tourism does trickle down to the general population as it ends up with the government and in government banks. It is then used to purchase necessary imports—medicines, buses, oil, machinery, even agricultural products from the United States. On the other hand, many Cubans working in the tourist sector get most of their income in dollars, mainly from tips, which greatly distort incentives in Cuba. Highly trained doctors, engineers and foreign language specialists often do not use their education and training but instead work as waitresses, taxi drivers, hotel doormen, and as cleaning staff because they can earn much more in the tourist sector.

The tourist industry and the aforementioned remittances also contribute to a growing inequality of income in Cuba, between those who get dollars and those who don't. Cuba, while far more equal than the rest of the Americas including the United States is much less equal than it was 20 years ago and this is a source of discontent. Most tourism is of the "beaches and sun" variety. Other forms of tourism are less destructive of socialist values and are being promoted: ecological tourism; cultural tourism (tourists coming to learn about Cuba's history, culture and revolution); medical tourism (visitors coming to Cuba for medical care); and educational tourism,



such as the thousands of Venezuelan students studying in Cuba and ourselves.

3. *Foreign Investment.* Cuba permits and encourages 50% ownership by foreign companies in various industries, e.g., hotels, nickel mining, and biotechnology. This is an attempt to bring in foreign capital and become more integrated into the global economy and obtain up-to-date technology to replace obsolete Soviet technology. The hope is that this can be done without being dominated by and becoming totally dependent on multinational corporations. Most contracts include technology-sharing and teaching of skills. Perhaps most important is ongoing off-shore oil exploration. Cuba currently imports one half of its oil and all of the oil used for transportation needs. Finding low sulfur Cuban oil would substantially strengthen the Cuban economy; it would make it easier for Cuba to import other goods and reduce its continued imbalance in international trade.

4. *Agriculture.* In agriculture, Cuba has moved away from state farms and centrally planning agricultural production. There has been a steady growth of private ownership of farms, and of co-operative ownership of the land. Organic farming techniques are increasingly used, and there has been a large growth in urban gardens. Privately-run farmers markets play an important role in supplying food. In them, farmers sell produce, above what they are required to sell to the state, at market prices. These reforms have significantly increased agricultural production over the last 12 years, particularly the organic production of fruits and vegetables. Food consumption has increased significantly although meat, except for pork is still scarce and expensive. However, these reforms have also created a group of high-income Cubans who sell produce at the farmers markets at prices that are high for those Cubans who do not have access to dollars.

5. *New Industries.* Cuba has an educated and skilled labor force. There is significant research and development resources invested in state industries such as medical instruments, and developing and producing medicines for AIDS, for curing cancer, hepatitis, malaria and other diseases. This is part of what the Cubans call biotechnology. There is a growth in the development and production of computer software. Cuba hopes to sell these products globally although exports in this sector are growing much slower than the Cuban planners had projected. The continuing hope is that this industry could be globally competitive, pay a livable wage and bring in substantial foreign exchange. Not surprisingly, the U.S. is trying to prevent these sales by pressuring other nations not to buy Cuban goods, but there is interest in developing and marketing these products even by U.S. firms.

Overall Assessment

Cuban's survival in the face of the U.S. attempt to destroy the Cuban revolution is a great achievement as is Cuba's continuing to provide for the basic needs of its population. For example, every single person in Cuba has free dental and eye care. Every person in Cuba with AIDS gets free, high-quality retroviral drugs.

Our responsibility as U.S. residents is to stop the criminal embargo/blockade against Cuba that is being waged by the U.S. government in our name. For 45 years, the people in power in the United States have been unwilling to accept a sovereign, independent Cuba. That is the main reason behind the past and present immoral and illegal U.S. actions against Cuba; we have the responsibility to change U.S. policy. During our six weeks in Cuba, we were all impressed by how well we were treated and received by the Cuban people and government who consider the U.S. people, but not the U.S. government as their friends. It is up to us to make the difference between the people of the U.S. and our government greater, to make our government's aggression against Cuba so unpopular in the United States that it is forced to accept Cuban sovereignty.

If the people in the United States are successful in getting our government to end the blockade, U.S. tourism to Cuba will grow exponentially. This will cause new problems in Cuba such as a growing desire for a first world standard of living, but it is up to Cubans who unanimously want the blockade to end, to deal with this.

In so far, as we work to end the blockade, we have a right to humbly criticize the Cuban system although the U.S. government does not have that right given its past and present policies. Cuba is as just as any country in the world; it deserves critical support from the people of the U.S. but there are real problems.

Cuba has not developed a workable strategy for simultaneously achieving economic and social equality, people's power and an improving quality of life. The main efforts of the Cuban government have been to survive, to maintain basic services and to increase economic production. They have accomplished the first two of these objectives but have not so far developed a strategy for sustainable economic development. Economic growth is necessary; otherwise increases in needed services such as public transportation comes at the expense of other needed goods and services. Possibly, increasing worker participation and power in work places could lead to higher productivity and production.

Income inequality is still worsening. Income equality could be improved by increasing the types and quantity of goods available at subsidized prices on the ration cards, and/or moving to one currency and price system and raising wages substantially for those getting paid in pesos. However, unless production is increased substantially and higher incomes are taxed more heavily than now, these reforms will cause huge inflationary pressures as demand increases; and increase balance of payments problems as imports increase.

The Cuban state, has maintained basic social services—free and available medical and dental care, free education up to and including university level, and food rations for the population at low and affordable prices, although not the quantity or variety that Cubans need and desire.

Cuban society is not the dictatorship you hear about in the media here; people do speak up and criticize, and there is no torture or disappearance of dissidents. There is some suppression of the organized opposition. This repression is because of the fear and the reality of the U.S. commitment to overthrow the Cuban revolution and return Cuba to a neocolonial status. We need to understand the context for Cuban government behavior without necessarily supporting it. The U.S. government does support much of the opposition in Cuba, for example, the 75 Cuban dissidents who were arrested and imprisoned in 2003. If Cuba openly financed opposition to capitalism in the U.S., or intervened in the U.S. elections, think how people in the U.S. receiving money from the Cuban government would be treated. Also, the U.S. is a clear threat to Cuba; Cuba is not to the United States, meaning that Cuban fears and actions are more justifiable than the United States actions would be.

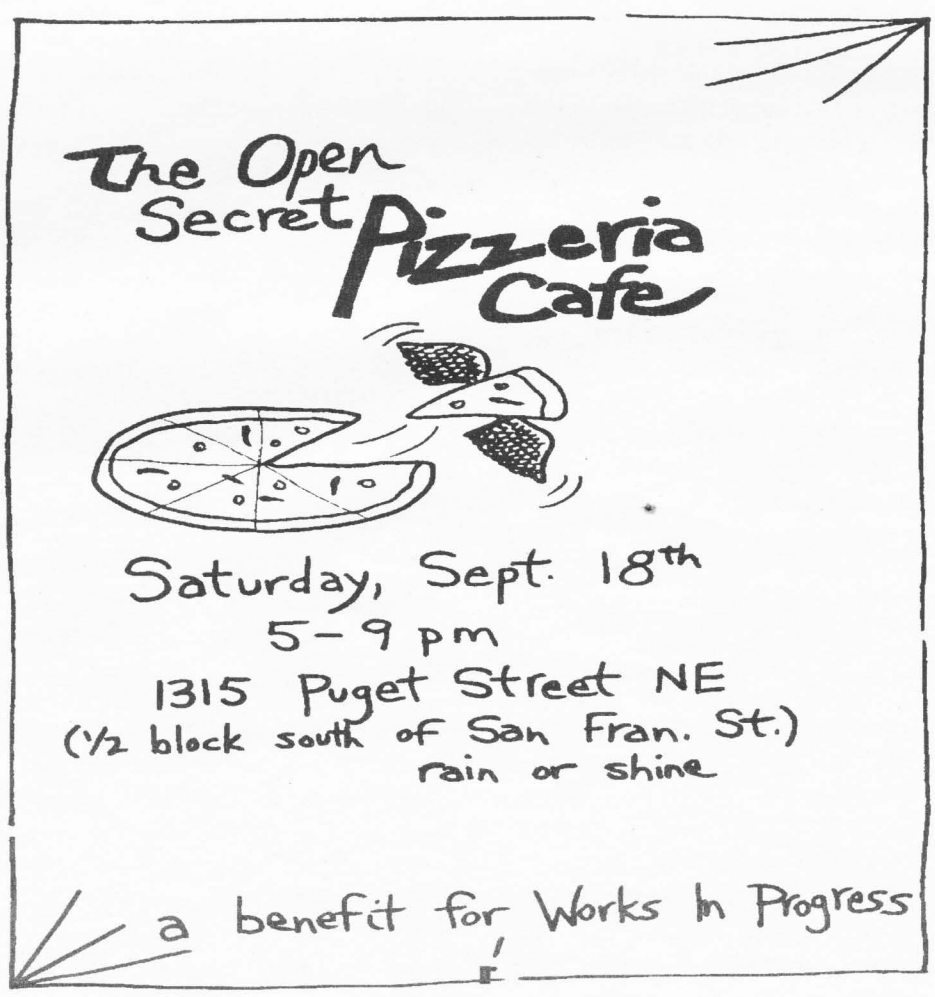
Nonetheless, there is only a limited role for worker control in Cuban enterprises, and the state-owned media is limited in its criticisms of the government. Because daily life is difficult and time-consuming in Cuba, participation and activism in public life have declined. Cynicism and dissatisfaction have grown, particularly among the young. The Special Period has been particularly hard for women as it has meant that maintenance of the family and family responsibilities take more time, e.g., the decline in public transportation, and there is less income available. The burden of this time and money squeeze has mainly fallen on women so they have less time than before for participation at the workplace, in the community and in the women's federation.

However, the Cuban revolution, the concept of socialism and Fidel Castro and the Communist Party are seen as legitimate by the majority of the population, and the overwhelming majority would fight in support of the revolution if the U.S. invaded. During our trip, we heard from many different Cubans that they and the revolution will persevere even with the most recent May, 2004 tightening of the blockade. This includes the reduced possibilities of U.S. travel to Cuba for educational purposes as well as by Cuban Americans, the increased funding by the U.S. government of groups who are actively trying to overthrow the Cuban government and of anti-Cuban propaganda, and other measures aimed at isolating Cuba and hurting the Cuban economy by reducing their access to foreign exchange.

The Future of Cuba

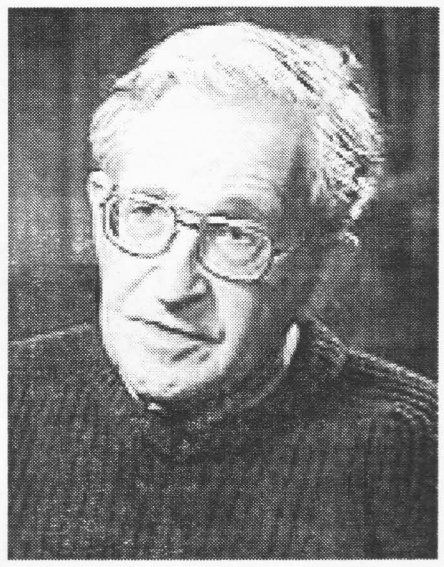
The Cuban government and many Cuban people fear a U.S. invasion. I think it is possible although not likely. There will, however be increased pressure and aggression against Cuba if Bush is re-elected. U.S. provocations such as flying military planes with radio and TV transmitters, which Bush announced on May 6, 2004, could lead to violations of Cuban airspace and U.S. military attacks on Cuba if Cuba defends itself against these violations. John Kerry's position on Cuba is not as bad as the current administration's but he does not accept Cuban self-determination and sovereignty as the basis for U.S. foreign policy. Kerry has said, if elected President, he would end the travel ban but he would not end the embargo/blockade or establish normal diplomatic relations with Cuba. If we are concerned about human rights and the right of all nations to choose their own system, we should do what we can to stop the U.S. from waging war against Cuba, whether it is an invasion or the continuing blockade.

In conclusion, the survival and maintenance of the Cuban Revolution is incredibly important for the Cuban people and globally. It is an alternative to neoliberalism and a beacon of hope for oppressed people around the world. I am often asked what will happen after Fidel Castro retires or dies. I think there will be no big changes immediately in Cuba nor will U.S. hostility end as it is aimed at the Cuban system not just at Castro. My hope for the future of Cuba is that as we work to reduce U.S. aggression, and as Cuba gains more economic and political allies in the world such as Venezuela, that Cuba will experiment with more people's democratic power and build a socialism that is participatory, egalitarian, and increasingly meets the needs of its people.


The Open Secret Pizzeria Cafe
Saturday, Sept. 18th
5-9 pm
1315 Puget Street NE
(½ block south of San Fran. St.)
rain or shine
a benefit for Works In Progress

Lively Noam Chomsky interview

Is the U.S. a terrorist state?



by Evan Soloman

Part One of a CBC Hot Type Transcript: Noam Chomsky "9-11", interview April 16, 2002.

ES: You say one of the great hypocracies here is that the United States, as you say, is a leading terrorist state...

The question that arises is if the United States is a leading terrorist state, if as you say, Britain is another example of a terrorist state, how do you distinguish between what you describe as terrorism and what they are saying - Osama Bin Laden who's a terrorist? Make the distinction.

NC: It's very simple. If they do it, it's terrorism. If we do it, it's counter-terrorism. That's a historical universal. Go back to Nazi propaganda. The most extreme mass murderers ever. If you look at Nazi propaganda, that's exactly what they said. They said they're defending the populations and the legitimate governments of Europe like Vichy from the terrorist partisans who are directed from London. That's the basic propaganda line. And like all propaganda, no matter how vulgar, it has an element of truth. The partisans did carry out terror, they were directed from London. The Vichy government is about as legitimate as half the governments the US has installed around the world and supports, so yes, there was a minor element of truth to it, and that's the way it works. If somebody else carries it out, it's terror. If we carry it out, it's counter-terror. I think perhaps one of the most dramatic examples right at this moment is a place where I just was a couple of weeks ago, southeastern Turkey. Southeastern Turkey is the site of some of the worst terrorist atrocities of the 1990s.

ES: This is the attacks on the Kurds.

NC: The attacks on the Kurds left a couple of million refugees. It left much of the countryside devastated. Tens of thousands of people killed. It was every imaginable barbaric form of torture you can dream of. It's all well documented in Human Rights Watch reports and so on. How did they do it? Well, they did it with a huge flow of U.S. arms, which peaked in 1997. In the single year 1997, in that one year, the arms transfers to Turkey from the United States were higher than the entire Cold War period. You know up until the insurgence, the counter-insurgency started. But look at the way it's treated. This massive international terrorism run and supported by the United States is considered a great triumph of counter-terrorism.

NC: If you read the State Department reports on terror they praise Turkey for its success in showing how to counter terror. You read a front page article in the New York Times and it praises Turkey for showing how to deal with terror. Turkey was selected as the country to provide the forces for what they call the international force for Afghanistan. Actually it's for Kabul alone. It's Turkey that's being paid by the United States extensively to carry out the repression of terror, thanks to their achievements in countering terror - namely by carrying out some of the worst terror of the 1990s. Massive ethnic cleansing and atrocities with U.S. support. Now you know this is a real achievement of the intellectual culture to be able to do this. But it illustrates very well the answer to your question. Terror and counter-terror. If some enemy state did this, we'd be not just outraged, we'd be bombing them.

ES: Is Bush justified in calling Bin Laden a terrorist when, as you say, he's running a terrorist state himself?

NC: Yes, I say he should call him a terrorist. Yea, I agree that he should call him a terrorist.

ES: But you say even Jonathan Swift would be baffled at the irony of that?

NC: To say that Bin Laden is a terrorist, a murderous terrorist is certainly correct, but what about Clinton? I just described one of his minor escapades in Turkey. This example is particularly striking, not only because of the massive atrocities, but remember, because of the way it's treated, and because remember this was at the same time when there was an orgy of self-congratulation among Western intellectuals because o f their magnificence in opposing terrorism by bombing Serbia because of what Milosevic had done in Kosovo.

ES: Let's talk about the Middle East, where Sharon says we are experiencing terrorist bombings and therefore we have to have a big operation in the West Bank and root out terrorism and people say, hey you're violating human rights. The Israelis say there's no equivalency between suicide bombings and protecting our security and Palestinians say there's no equivalence between suicide bombings and the Occupation.

If people cannot rise to the level of applying to ourselves the same standards we apply to others we have no right to talk about right and wrong or good and evil.
~Noam Chomsky

NC: This is the thirty-fifth year of a harsh, brutal and vicious occupation supported unilaterally by the United States, constant terror and atrocities. Suppose Palestinians say, well we're under terrorist attack for 35 years, therefore we have a right to carry out suicide bombings.

ES: Which is what they say.

NC: Do you accept this? Does anybody accept this?

ES: Nobody accepts this.

NC: All right, then how come everyone accepts the Israeli claim to be doing it, which is a much weaker claim, because after all there is no symmetry in the situation. They are the military occupiers. Palestine isn't occupying Israel, and this hasn't just started now, it's gone on for years.

ES: So does that in your mind justify...?

NC: No, it does not, of course not, it doesn't in anybody's mind...

ES: It invalidates both sides?

NC: Those who defend suicide bombing, and there are very few, don't have a leg to stand on. Those who defend the Israeli atrocities, including the U.S. government, most intellectual opinion, a good bit of the West generally, they don't have a leg to stand on either and they have a much weaker position.

Let's go back to Turkey again. Take the Powell mission. Powell is praised because he's such a wonderful diplomat. He went to Yasser Arafat, who's imprisoned in a dungeon where he can't even flush the toilet and he extracted from him a statement condemning terror. Did anybody request that Powell should have asked Sharon to condemn the Israeli atrocities? Did anyone suggest that Powell ask George Bush to condemn the fact that he's been sending Israel the Apache attack helicopters which have been devastating Jenin?

Can you find a word in the press anywhere that suggested Powell should have requested a condemnation of Israeli terror from Sharon? And of U.S. backing of that terror from Bush?

I mean that's a thought that couldn't enter anyone's mind. And the reason is because our profound commitment to terror and violence when it's committed by our clients and by ourselves is so deep that we can't even think of the question.

Differing perspectives: Robert Kaplan and Noam Chomsky

ES: You suggested after September 11th, that we ought to look in the mirror, we being America or the West. We ought to look in the mirror at ourselves. Was that a way of saying - "Look, people like Bin Laden are angry at us for good reason?"

NC: That's not what I was saying. The statement of mine that you just quoted is a very conservative statement, in fact it was articulated by George Bush's favorite philosopher, Jesus Christ, ah who pointed out, famously, defined the notion, hypocrite. A hypocrite is a person who focuses on the other fellow's crimes and refuses to look at his own. That's the definition of hypocrite by George Bush's favorite philosopher. When I repeat that I'm not taking a radical position. I'm taking a position that is just elementary morality.

ES: But even if he is a hypocrite...

NC: Not he, everybody. Let me ask you another question. Here's an experiment. Try to find a phrase in the massive commentary on September 11th, that is not hypocritical in the sense of George Bush's favorite philosopher. Find one phrase. I don't think you can do it.

ES: OK but before, I don't want to get gnostic here and religious...

NC: This is not religion, this is elementary morality. If people cannot rise to the level of applying to ourselves the same standards we apply to others we have no right to talk about right and wrong or good and evil.

ES: But look, if there's nobody pure, an argument has been made, sure the US has committed atrocities, however they did oust a more brutal regime, the Taliban ...

NC: That wasn't even a war aim. That wasn't even a war aim. That wasn't even a war aim.

ES: But is that a moral thing to do? They did get rid of a brutal regime (fine) There was celebration...

NC: Good. Fine. Then let them bomb Israel and get rid of the brutal regime there. Let them bomb Uzbekistan and get rid of the brutal regime there.

ES: Are you saying the Taliban and the Israeli government are the same?

NC: No they're not the same. They're brutal regimes, but let's go back a stage. The goal was not to oust the Taliban. That was not a war aim. That was a war aim that was picked up several weeks after the bombing started. OK? And let's go back, suppose, and there are dozens, a long list of brutal regimes around the world, which ought to be overthrown, but not by somebody bombing them. However let's go back to late October, after three weeks of bombing when the US and its' British client, decided to shift the war aims overthrowing the Taliban regime.

Well, how do you proceed to do that? There are differences of opinion. For example there was an Afghan position on this right at that time, late October. There was a meeting sponsored by the United States in Peshawar, Pakistan of a thousand Afghan leaders, tribal leaders, some of them came in from Afghanistan, others were in Pakistan. These are political leaders, tribal leaders, others supported and backed by the United States. Now they disagreed on all sorts of things, but they did agree on one thing, namely they unanimously condemned the bombing and said it would undermine their efforts, which they thought could succeed to overthrow the Taliban regime from within.

Two weeks before that the US favorite Abdul Haht went into Afghanistan, turned out he was killed because he didn't get any Western support, but he want in to Pakistan to try to organize, to Afghanistan to try to organize opposition to the Taliban, right before he went in he had a long interview with the Carneige, distributed by the Carneige Endowment for International Peace , in which he bitterly condemned the US bombing. He said the same thing as the 1000 tribal leaders. He said it's undermining. He said the US is doing it just to show off their muscle, they don't care what happens to Afghanistan. They're undermining attempts which will succeed, he thought, and he's probably right to undermine the Taliban regime from within and overthrow it. The leading women's group in Pakistan, Rawa, which has been fighting courageously for women, for years fighting for women's rights, took exactly the same position. So there are ideas about

how to overthrow the Taliban, did anybody pay attention? No, because exactly as Abdul Haht said, the US and Britain wanted to show their muscle.

So the question of how to overthrow a regime, yea that arises and I think the Afghans are right. Regimes should be overthrown from within, and in this case it was probably very likely that that would succeed. It was a small brutal group, highly unpopular, plenty of opposition to it, which could have been organized from within, and that's the way to overthrow a regime. If we want to overthrow the regime of Uzbekistan, now a great favorite, but it happens not to be any different from the Taliban, the way to do it would not be to bomb Uzbekistan, but to support internal democratic forces and let them do it. And that generalizes around the world.

ES: Robert Kaplan writes about foreign policy. I spoke to him recently about his book "Warrior Politics," and I put some of your points to him and he said, about the distinction between the terrorist states that you call Israel, America, and the terrorist states that America calls the Taliban, "I wish Noam Chomsky had been with me in Romania in the 70s or the 80s, just one of the seven or eight Warsaw States, with just one of the 7 or 8 prison systems with 700,000 political prisoners. Adult choice of foreign policy is made on distinctions. The argument that Chomsky makes has no distinctions because there's a difference between the quantity and the kind of dictators that America supported and the quantity and the kind of things that went on in the Communist world for 44 years."

NC: OK, so let's take his example, Romania, Ceausescu. Hideous regime, which he forgot to tell you the United States supported. Supported right until the end, as did Britain, when Ceausescu came to London he was feted by Margaret Thatcher. When George Bush the First came into office, I think the first person he invited to Washington was Ceausescu. Yes, Romania was a miserable, brutal regime supported by the United States right to the end, as Robert Kaplan knows very well, so the example he gave is a perfect example.

ES: It wasn't supported by the States in the 70s though?

NC: In the 70s, in the 80s, right to the end of Ceausescu's rule. It was supported by the United States. The reasons had to do with great power politics. They were sort of breaking Warsaw Pact policies and so on, but the very example he picks illustrates it and we can proceed onward.

So the very example he gives shows the absurdity of his position and it's a small example because we support much more brutal regimes. It has nothing to do with Cold War issues.

I gave an example in South Eastern Turkey, several million refugees, tens of thousands of people killed, a country devastated, that's rather serious.

Nobody accused Milosevic of that in Kosovo.

Suharto was one of the worst killers and torturers of the late twentieth century. The United States and Britain supported him throughout. He's our kind of guy, as the Clinton administration said in 1995. Horrible atrocities, in fact, when he came into office in 1965 with a coup the CIA compared it to Hitler, Stalin and Mao.

It led to total euphoria in the United States, Britain and massive support when he carried out even worse atrocities, comparable atrocities elsewhere - a couple 100,000 people killed then, 100,000s killed later, full support continued right through the end of his rule, in fact, continued past his rule. In late 1999 when they were rampaging and destroying what was left of East Timor, the US and Britain continued to support him and I can continue through the world like this...

ES: Well, what Kaplan says is - there is a distinction ...that everyone's got some blood on their hands, but he says - we have significantly less blood because we are soft imperialists, not state terrorists.

NC: So when we supported his example - Ceausescu in Romania, right to the end, that's good? How about killing several million people in Vietnam. How about killing hundreds of thousands of people in Central America in the 80s, leaving four countries devastated beyond, maybe beyond recovery?

ES: Does that disqualify the US from intervening in any other way?

NC: No it doesn't, nor does it disqualify the Taliban, which is a terrorist state, that fact doesn't disqualify them from bombing Washington. What disqualifies them from doing that is even if they were Mahatma Ghandi, they shouldn't do it.

Kaplan can't understand trivialities. The triviality here is that nobody except the ultra right wing jingoists like Kaplan are comparing atrocities by various countries. What honest people are saying seems to be incomprehensible, that we should keep to the elementary moral level of the gospels. We should pay attention to our own crimes and stop committing them. This would be true even if we were killing one person, OK?

And it's even more true when we're killing millions of people.

ES: Let's try to look at the bigger picture because the question, he says, we all agree with the gospels...

NC: Kaplan doesn't, he doesn't, he certainly doesn't.

ES: Kaplan says the world is nasty. If you leave people alone, they'll kill each other and that's why what you need is what he calls an organizing hegemon...

NC: Which is always us. Right and why is it us? Because we have the power and we have a massively subservient intellectual class, of which he's an illustration, which will support U.S. atrocities no matter how awful they are.

ES: So if he says this is real politics, that Chomsky's off in another land with his gospel, and he says look...

NC: Forget gospel. I'm talking about the most elementary morality. If a person doesn't understand that, they have no right to talk. OK? If you don't understand that you pay attention to your own crimes, you have no right to talk.

ES: He talks about Machiavellian virtue. He says that sometimes the end justifies the means, sometimes we do a bad thing to protect our democracy and our good institutions in a just society.

NC: And how are we protecting our democratic institutions by supporting mass slaughter in South Eastern Turkey in the last few years? Was that supporting our democratic institutions?

NC: Our democratic institutions? Anybody's?

ES: Would Kaplan argue that the nation state has a right to use any means necessary to protect its sovereignty?

NC: Oh then he's justifying Milosevic. He's saying Milosevic had the right to do anything he wanted to repress the Kosovars in Albania. Is that what he's saying?

ES: I think he would not say that.

NC: Why not?

ES: He would say that violates virtue...

NC: Oh so when they do it, it violates virtue, but when we do it it's virtuous?

ES: Should there be an organizing hegemon, do we need a constabulary, a force, a central force. In this case it's America because it's a superpower. Sometimes use unjust means in the service of just causes.

NC: What are the just causes? What was the just cause in, for example, slaughtering Kurds in South Eastern Turkey? What was the just cause in supporting Suharto? When he killed a couple hundred thousand landless peasants in Indonesia, went on to become one of the biggest torturers in the world and destroyed, slaughtered a third of the population in East Timor, what was the just cause?

What was the just cause when we invaded South Vietnam 40 years ago? This is the 40th anniversary of the public announcement of the U.S. attack on South Vietnam, ending up killing millions of people, leaving the country devastated. They're still dying from chemical warfare. What was the just cause?

What was the just cause when we fought a war to a large extent against the Catholic Church in Central America in the 1980s, killing hundreds of thousands of people, every imaginable kind of torture and devastation, what was the just cause? The just cause for people like Kaplan was yes, we did it, therefore it's a just cause. You can read that in the Nazi archives too.

Can trust be restored?

ES: It's no great secret that we function by self-interest. Self-interest is part of foreign policy. We're here to protect our policy, protect the interests of our policy, in this case of the Americans.

NC: Was the self-interest the American people served by slaughters in Southeastern Turkey, or by destroying Vietnam, or by turning El Salvador and Guatemala into cemeteries?

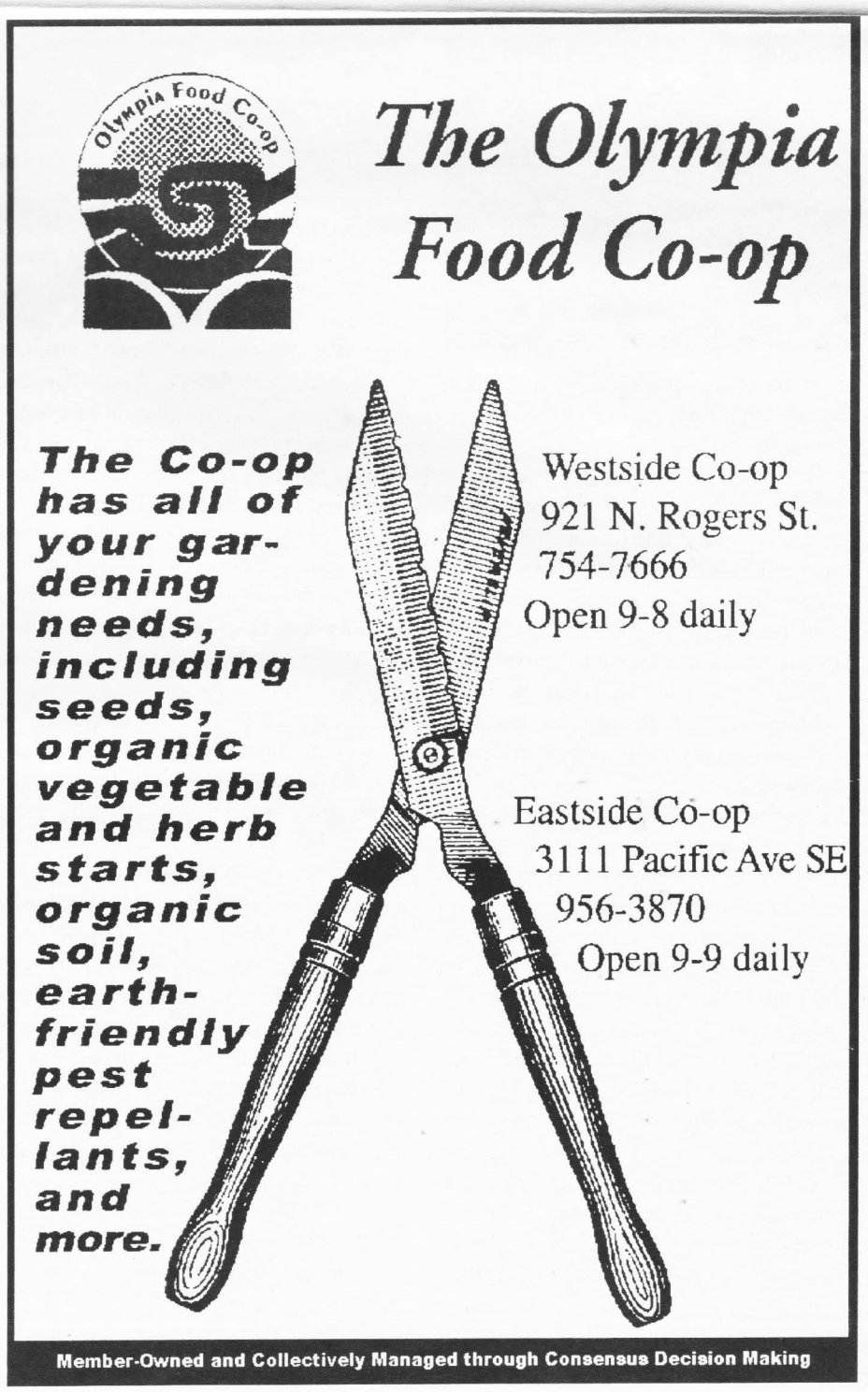
NC: Was the self-interest of the American people served by that? No. The self-interest served by that is foreign policy elites and the power-centers they represent, which are not protecting the American people, they're protecting their own power, profit, dominance and hegemony, like others around the world.

NC: And they count on intellectuals of the Robert Kaplan type to applaud any atrocity they carry out.

ES: How do you respond to the following attitude: We don't want to live with them, we don't want to negotiate with them, we must destroy them, make war against the Taliban, justify the war against the Al Aqsa brigades, we see the faces of our enemies and we should do anything to root them out.... How do you respond to that?

NC: I respond to that by saying that there are many evil forces in the world. If we want to stop atrocities, I think it's a great idea to reduce the level of atrocities and violence around the world. The easiest way to do it, simple, is to stop participating in it. If we stop participating in it, we will already reduce the levels of atrocities and violence enormously.

NC: And if we can ever reach the moral level, minimum moral level, of terminating our own massive participation in atrocities, then we can move to another question of what we do about the atrocities of others.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How to Reduce Jail Populations

by Glen Anderson

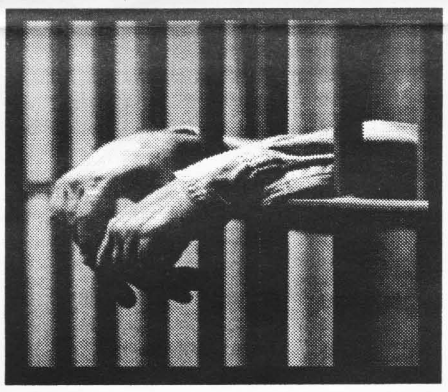
Thurston County's jail is crowded, so the county commissioners assume they need to build more jails.If your closets are full, would you build a bigger house – OR would you clean out your closets? The best solution to jail overcrowding is to reduce the jail population.. Cost-effective solutions do exist!

The County's Tunnel Vision

In May Thurston County's voters overwhelmingly rejected building a big new jail. In August the Thurston County commissioners held a public hearing about where to build a new jail. What tunnel vision!

It wasn't just the location or the enormous price tag that caused the landslide "NO" vote. It was also the mindless assumption that jails are good solutions. If we reduce jail population we can relieve the pressure for building more jails. Many solutions exist! The county is exploring some alternatives but could explore many more.

The county (and the pro-jail Olympian newspaper) keep justifying a new jail by saying that the ACLU will sue the county to stop the overcrowding. But the ACLU is not an advocate of big jails. The ACLU would be happy if the county would find humane alternatives instead of another jail. People – ordinary citizens of our community – keep telling me that they felt compelled to vote "NO" in May because jails are not the solution. *We must solve the underlying problems!* Fortunately, many cost-effective alternatives do exist.



Analyze the Systems

Nationwide, crime has been decreasing for a good number of years, but despite this, we're sending more and more people to jail and prison. The United States now has more than two million people behind bars, and we keep building more jails and prisons. Escalating costs for jails and prisons are ruining state and local government budgets all across the U.S. Reducing jail populations in the right ways can also improve public safety by freeing the law enforcement system to focus on the real safety issues instead of bogging down with people who don't need to be in jail. In 2000 the U.S. Dept. of Justice issued a report about jail crowding. This report concluded, *"Over the years, the view that a jurisdiction can solve its jail crowding problem through building has proved to be wrong."*

Jail crowding is *NOT* a "jail" issue, but rather a *criminal justice systems* issue! Morris Thigpen, the director of the National Institute of Corrections, wrote that a crowded jail indicates the need for *"a thorough examination of criminal justice policies, procedures, and practices."*

The U.S. Dept. of Justice and other respected authorities urge us to examine jail crowding from a *systems* perspective. Each actor in the system directly affects jail population:

Legislators pass laws about crimes and sentences. *Police* have discretion regarding whom to arrest, especially in non-felony situations. *Prosecutors* have discretion regarding what charges to file and what sentences to seek. *Judges* have discretion regarding sentences in many cases, although less now than in the past 20 years with determinate sentences and mandatory minimums. The availability of *social services* and other *community infrastructure* can determine whether people receive treatment to solve their problems.

We need to examine jail crowding from a *systems* perspective:

- Organize representatives from different parts of the criminal justice system and relevant interest groups (social service agencies, advocates for the disadvantaged, etc.) to collaborate on the analysis, solutions, and implementation.
- Gather thorough statistics and analyze them insightfully.
- Identify the factors leading to jailing.
- Identify the factors that cause time spent in jail to be longer than absolutely necessary.
- Devise solutions to relieve each factor that adds significantly to the jail population.

We must gather and analyze statistics of who is in jail, how they got there, and what happens to them after they arrive. It is necessary to gather and analyze data using a *longitudinal approach* that analyzes the steps in the process, so we can analyze the timeframes, the bottlenecks and delays, and how we can expedite each step. Greater efficiency in moving people through the process can reduce jail populations and reduce the need for any new jail. An outside expert urged this long ago, but Thurston County is only now beginning to do this. (Thurston County has been using an inadequate "snapshot" method that looks at day-by-day data without this important longitudinal aspect.)

Longitudinal analysis can reveal important information that can lead to practical strategies for reducing crowding. In another jail, researchers found that half of the individuals booked into the jail stayed for fewer than 3 days, but even this large number of individuals consumed only 6 percent of the jail's bed space. On the other hand, 11 percent of the individuals booked into that jail stayed for more than 30 days, and these 11 percent of individuals consumed 72 percent of the jail's bed space. Overcrowding resulted from the people staying more than 30 days, so the officials focused on the factors affecting these kinds of individuals.

Better data gathering and analysis could also help us identify which segments of the jail population are overrepresented or are growing disproportionately, so we can devise alternatives to reduce those.

Seven years ago Thurston County contracted with an outside expert to analyze jail-related operations and recommend efficiencies. Instead of implementing them, the county pursued the build-another-jail approach, which the voters rejected in May. The outside expert's recent update of his previous report emphasized many practical solutions. The county is finally – at last – starting to implement many of those recommendations. They should proceed further.

Cost-Effective Alternatives

Improving various factors could reduce jail population. For example, we could:

(1) Put people through the system more efficiently.

(2) Decriminalize some drug offenses and victimless crimes.

(3) Reduce sentence lengths.

A great number of crime prevention programs have been proven to work. Not only do they reduce crime, but they also save taxpayer dollars, and they also spare the public the costs of becoming crime victims.

(4) Intervene early to turn new offenders' lives around.

(5) Reduce crime.

Slightly more than half of the people in the Thurston County jail are awaiting trial. Some of these people are not dangerous and could be released on "personal recognizance" or on bail until pending their trials. We need to invest more resources and creativity in "pre-trial services" to free up bed space and reduce crowding.

More creative sentences (e.g., more electronic home monitoring and sentencing to programs that will solve their underlying problems) and more probation officers could allow some who have been convicted to be out of jail while still accountable for their crimes.

Drug Court is a big success in Thurston County and elsewhere in the US. It recognizes that some people's criminal behavior stems from drug abuse, so it provides a way to divert people from the standard criminal justice system and brings together professional resources to meet those needs. Specially trained judges, prosecutors, substance abuse experts, and others design ways to meet people's needs and hold them accountable without sending them to jail. Their treatment is thorough, so those people who graduate from Drug Court are less likely to reoffend.

We could reduce the number of people in the Thurston County Jail by expanding our Drug Court and starting an analogous **Mental Health Court**. We also need a special facility where some people who break a law but whose real problem is mental illness could be diverted from jail altogether. Residential and non-residential mental health treatment would also relieve the need for more jails.

Clark County has an analogous court for people who are extremely poor or homeless, so it can focus on meeting their underlying needs without filling up its jail.

Let's invest in better social services, and let's coordinate our court system better with them. This would actually help people SOLVE their problems so they don't keep coming back to jail.

If we want to reduce jail populations, one of the best way is to reduce crime. If fewer crimes are committed, fewer people will be sent to jail. A great number of crime prevention programs have been proven to work. Not only do they reduce crime, but they also save taxpayer dollars, and they also spare the public the costs of becoming crime victims. Smart crime prevention programs are win-win solutions that save several dollars for every dollar invested. Many are documented in a very thorough report of outstanding quality, "The Comparative Costs and Benefits of Programs to Reduce Crime," published by a small state agency, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, at www.wa.gov/wsipp or 586-2677.

Some crimes can be addressed by structured processes that make the offender understand what he did, help the victim, and restore wholeness to the community. Many traditional indigenous communities have used such procedures at the village level for countless centuries. Modern societies also practice such alternatives in the forms of Restorative Justice, Victim-Offender Mediation, Citizen Accountability Panels, and Community Accountability Boards. These operate well in Mason County; Vancouver, Washington; Bend, Oregon; many other places around the U.S. and Canada; and elsewhere.

Some jurisdictions have an Office of Alternative Sentencing or Office of Alternative Sanctions.

Imagine even more creative alternatives

How much crime could be prevented if people had ready access to nonjudgmental training and therapy related to anger management, conflict resolution, nonviolent communication, victim awareness, and education?

How much crime could be prevented if social services and financial assistance were readily available – without sacrificing one's dignity to apply and receive them?

How much crime could be prevented if people were less alienated from society? If people could learn to empathize with other people? If people could learn to de-escalate conflicts at the outset?

How much of the violence and free-floating anger that pervade our society are rooted in the U.S.'s violent foreign policy and our various kinds of social and economic injustice? Working for peace and profound social justice could help reduce jail populations.

The discussion and examples above are just a few of the practical and creative approaches that could reduce jail populations.

Building more jails – even a $20 million "satellite jail," as the county is now proposing – is an expensive dead-end. Let's actually solve the problems instead!

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New Letters from Two Plowshares Sisters

Here are the latest letters from Dominican Sisters Carol Gilbert and Ardeth Platte, doing time in federal prisons for their symbolic act of civil disobedience at a Colorado nuclear missile silo in 2002.

Ardeth has had an operation at last to restore sight in one eye after a longstanding problem, and she is much better for it. She says, "the restoration is like a miracle to me. I know I strained the better eye and it too needs healing, so I'm taking my time, resting more, reading a bit less and treasuring all of nature once again, enhancing my spirit. The long wait taught me the practice of patience, though I did a stack of paperwork to be heard in this system."

Ardeth adds, "It looks like I may be welcoming Martha Stewart to Danbury in the months ahead. She will learn much in this system and will be able to speak out in the future in a wider forum. None of it will be easy, but many experiences in life help us in our journeys, right?"

I have not received any letters from Jackie Hudson lately, personally or via email. She has just undergone another bereavement with the death of her dear friend and fellow activist, Jackie Bennett. Ardeth writes, "Jackie Hudson and Jackie Bennett have been leaders all of us in so many ways, by their example and their words."

Here follow the recent letters of Ardeth and Carol. Please write to them if you are so moved. -- Holly Gwinn Graham

Letter from Sister Ardeth Platte

Dear Friends of Justice and Peace,

Douglas Roche, in his book *The Human Right to Peace*, writes, "I want a world that is human-centered and genuinely democratic – a world that builds and protects peace, equality, justice and development. I want a world where human security as envisioned in the principles of the U.N. Charter, replaces armaments, violent conflict and wars. I want a world where everyone lives in a clean environment with a fair distribution of the earth's resources and where human rights are protected by a body of international law."

Mr. Roche makes it so clear that "war causes starvation, deepens poverty, ruins environments, forces migrations of peoples, wrecks the rule of law, multiplies the gap between rich and poor, and causes prolonged misery for the most vulnerable people." He claims that, "War is not in the human genes. We are not predestined to violence. War comes out of our culture, the way we are socialized to interact with one another." He claims that, "those who engage in peace work are the realists of our time, for they understand that the new technologies are accelerating the spread of weapons of mass destruction, and with them, the capacity to end life on earth."

From: _Exception to the Rulers

Wilfred Burchett wrote in his dispatch: "In Hiroshima, thirty days after the first atomic bomb destroyed the city and shook the world, people are still dying mysteriously and horribly – people who were uninjured in the cataclysm from an unknown something which I can only describe as an atomic plague. Hiroshima does not look like a bombed city. It looks as if a monster steamroller has passed over it and squashed it out of existence."

Over 200,000 people died in the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The city of Hiroshima with a population of 350,000 had to be razed. Multi-story buildings were reduced to charred posts. Burchett saw people's shadows seared into walls and sidewalks. He met people with their skin melting off. In the hospital he saw patients with purple skin, hemorrhages, gangrene, fever and rapid hair loss.

We remember and act in repentance and love:

1. September 25 October 2 - Keep Space for Peace Week - Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space. 207-729-0517 or www.space4peace.org
2. Adopt-A-Silo 2004! Nonviolent actions at all 49 Minuteman III Missile silos in northeastern Colorado October 2 – Ending War 303-499-7038 or cyndaca@hotmail.com
3. Presence in prayer, fasting, vigiling in your area of the world.

Decommission, Disarm, Dismantle WMD/Nuclear Weapons

USA 10,600 Russia 10,000
China 400 - Israel 200+
France 350 Britain 185 - India 60 - Pakistan 48

Information Gleaned from Nukewatch

Thank you for the great books:

1. *The Gandhi Reader* by Homer A. Jack
2. *The Healing Power of Purpose* by Jean Maalouf
3. *The Human Right to Peace* by Douglas Roche
4. *The Devolution Will Not be Televised* poems by Gary Erb

And a new subscription to *Harpers Magazine*

Two Saints return to God:

My heart is filled with gratitude for the life, example and friendship of Peacemaker Helen Casey of Midland, Michigan. Helen – Presente!

Sister Jackie Bennett, OP, our dear sister and friend supported us at demonstration sites and from her workplace. Jackie – Presente!

I trust they will stir up the heavens for an Earth filled with justice and peace.

August is a month to remember history, to ask, seek and knock at doors for an end to warfare. The world cannot bear up under the burden of violence. I feel deeply connected with all of you and hope you experience the strength and courage also that comes from unity in conviction.

My heart is filled with love and gratitude for you, for your concern, for your gifts, for your letters and for your life giving.

Always grateful,
Sister Ardeth Platte, OP
10857-039
Federal Correction Institution
33 ½ Pembroke Station
Danbury, CT 06811

Letter from Sister Carol Gilbert

Dearest Friends,

It's that time of the month again when I catch you up on prison life and some of my ponderings. We are closing in on 19 months of lock down.

Alderson is located 270 miles SW of Washington DC in the foothills of the Allegheny Mountains. This summer has been magnificent with little humidity and cool nights. Our gardens are growing and producing. I've enjoyed fresh lettuce, beans, zucchini and cucumbers. We await the tomatoes.

I'm beginning to wonder if I should be playing the lottery these days since I was randomly chosen again to be drug (urine) tested two months in a row! This time it was 4:45 am and I had just showered and met my bodily needs, so once again I sat and sat in the Administration building until 6:30 am. The good news is that it allowed me time for a wonderful conversation with a long time female guard. She remembered many of the peacemakers, especially Jean Gump and Liz McAlister. She remarked how different those days were 18-20 years ago before warehousing as we have today with the new buildings. She looks forward to her retirement.

On one of my daily walks I found a blue jay feather and yellow/black feather which one of the Cherokee women here made into a beautiful dream catcher for me. One evening walking to Church a baby bat was flying at me, waist high level a bit scary for those of you who know me.

In one of the many flowerbeds we found a neon green caterpillar with black spots lined up all in a row. One of the women told me this turns into a magnificent moth and is called a Tomato Hornworm.

We've had dental students these past weeks helping the dentist get caught up. They are pulling teeth and putting in temporary fillings the prison doesn't give permanent fillings.

The Yarn Project has me busy knitting mittens, as those are most needed for the poor children of this area for winter.

Next month I hope to write about our prison cuts. Alderson must cut $3 million from its budget!

One of the insights I've gained this past month is that after I write something that is troubling me, there is great healing. My letters lift a great weight. It is as if putting pen to paper has a positive effect.

I want to share with you one of the most painful experiences I've had since incarcerated. Last summer at this time I was in a small, northern Colorado jail awaiting transport to federal prison. During those weeks I met an extraordinary young woman from Boulder, CO. Many of you know the quote: "Some people come into our lives and quickly go; others stay for a while and we are never the same." And so it was with this young woman who touched my spirit. I knew both the criminal (in)justice system and mental health system were failing her. I was concerned that without help she would die. She was soon to be released and she wrote me in the fall here in Alderson.

In February I received a letter from her parents informing me that she was found dead in her Boulder apartment on December 28, 2003 (Feast of the Holy Innocents) most likely from heart problems due to anorexia. I have shed many tears as I wondered what more I could have done. In my head I know I was not responsible for her death, but my heart has been heavy. I am so grateful her mother wrote to me my address was in a book I'd given her that her parents found when cleaning her apartment. I am also grateful that her spirit touched my life for even so brief a time.

These past months I've been pondering prayer. I've never felt comfortable praying for cures for friends with cancer, an end to war, safe travel, passing an exam, rain, no rain, etc., etc., etc. Prayer isn't about my wants and my will and I've never thought of God as deciding who gets what dished out to them. Bad things do happen to good people all the time and a loving God doesn't make those decisions.

So, what I have come to believe is that prayer is presence. Prayer is being in the presence of God. Prayer is being present every moment to the mystery of God.

As Joan Chittister so aptly writes: *The function of prayer is certainly not to cajole God into saving us from ourselves. "Please God, don't let us die in a nuclear war!" surely is not a real prayer. We can stop nuclear war ourselves by stopping the manufacture of nuclear weapons. No, the function of prayer is not magic. The function of prayer is not the bribery of the infinite. The function of prayer is not to change the mind of God about decisions we have already made for ourselves. The function of prayer is to change my own mind, to enable grace to break into me.*

Thus, prayer is about grace and surrender and gratitude. Prayer is about surrendering and surrendering gracefully to the mystery that is God. My life is a prayer. My prayer is my life.

As we ready ourselves for the third anniversary of 9-11, I leave you with these thoughts:

- Wage peace with your breath,
- Breathe in firemen and rubble,
- Breathe out whole buildings and flocks of redwing blackbirds.
- Breathe in terrorists and
- Breathe out sleeping children and freshly mown fields.
- Breathe in confusion and breathe out maple trees.
- Breathe in the fallen and breathe out lifelong friendships intact.
- Wage peace with your listening
- Hearing sirens, pray loud.
- Remember your tools, flower seeds, clothespins, clean rivers,
- Make soup. Play music
- Learn the word for *thank you* in three languages.
- Learn to knit and make a hat
- Think of chaos as dancing raspberries.
- Imagine grief as the outbreath of beauty or the gesture of fish.
- Swim for the other side.
- Wage peace,
- Never has the world seemed so fresh and precious.
- Have a cup of tea and rejoice.
- Act as if armistice has already arrived.

May you be well these summer days! May you find hope in the village of Le Chambon... you may want to read 'Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed by Philip Hallie. He writes: "In an ethic of life and death there is an ethic of refusal and there is an ethic of positive action." Let's refuse and act!

My deepest love and gratitude.
Carol

You may write to Sister Carol Gilbert, OP #10856-039 at RI Federal Prison Camp, P.O. Box A, Alderson, WV 24910. Send only cards or letters. Nothing else is accepted by the "company store."

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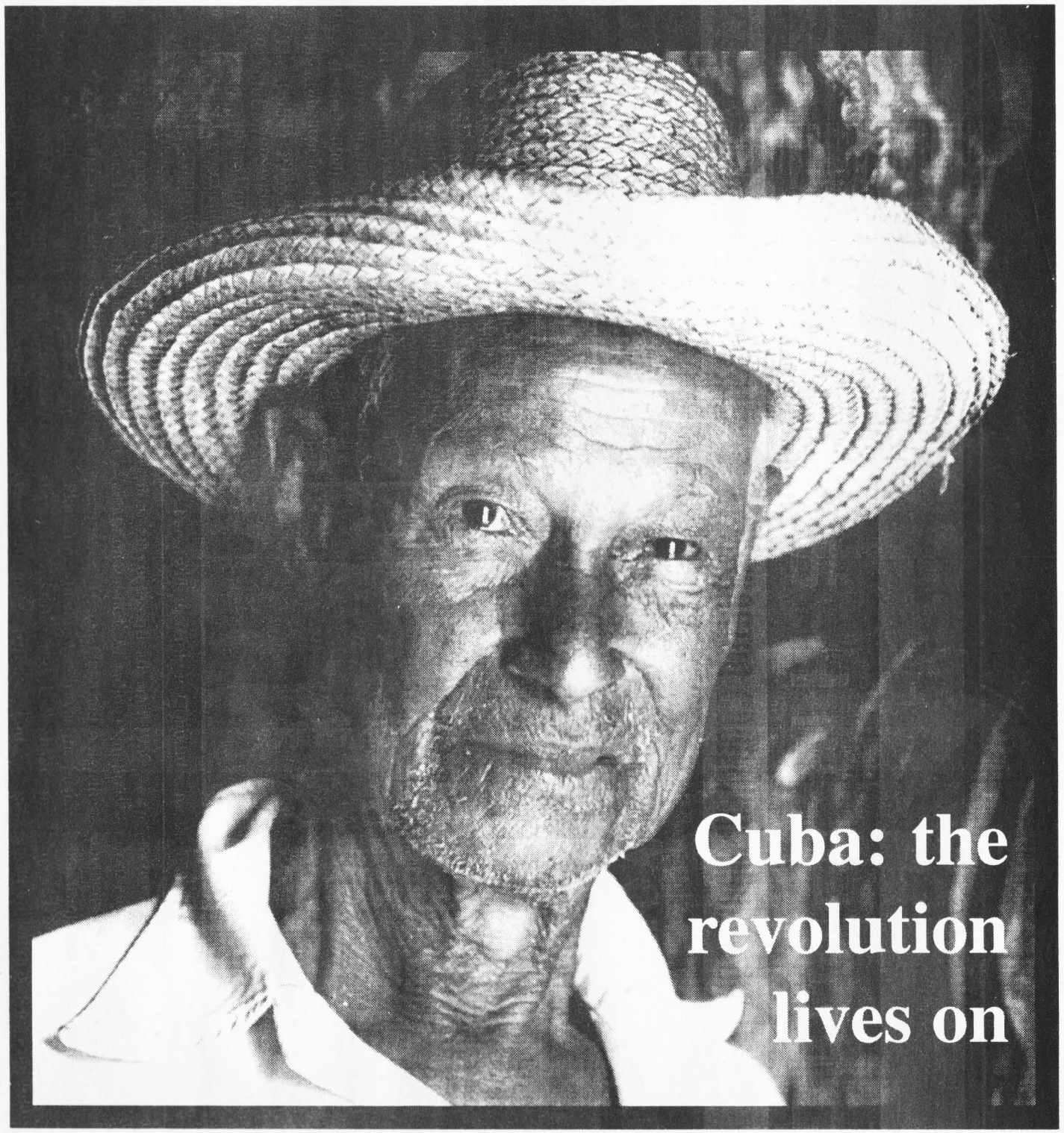

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